

In the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions.

1. (Currently Amended) A method for testing a cascode circuit ~~comprising~~ including a ~~plurality of~~ plurality of electronic elements to be protected from high voltage and a plurality of cascode elements connected to said electronic elements, the method comprising the steps of:

arranging a plurality of test nodes between ~~said~~ each electronic element and ~~said~~ each cascode element;

for each test node, allocating a different switching element ~~to said test node~~ and connecting said switching element thereto ~~said test node~~, said each switching element having a plurality of switching states ~~and being constituted such that its switching state is~~ are changed when the voltage at ~~said~~ a connected test node exceeds or falls below a given voltage limit;

connecting each test node to a first test line and a second test line, the first test line indicating whether the switching state of at least one switching element from the switching elements is in a changed switching state;

choosing a first voltage to apply to the first test line and a second voltage to apply to the second test line;

activating ~~said~~ at least one cascode element using an activation circuit; and

detecting the switching state of ~~said~~ at least one switching element using a detection circuit;

~~wherein said cascode circuit comprises a plurality of electronic elements to be protected from high voltage and a plurality of cascode elements, each cascode element~~

~~being connected to an electronic element, and wherein a group of switching elements is connected by at least one test line so that the electric signal on said at least one test line indicates whether the switching state of at least one switching element from said group of switching elements is in a changed switching state.~~

2. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said voltage limit is either chosen to be an upper voltage limit applicable to ~~said~~ an electronic element if said electronic element is connected to a ground-voltage line, or is chosen to be a supply voltage minus an upper voltage limit applicable to ~~said~~ the electronic element if said electronic element is connected to a supply-voltage line.

3. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein ~~said~~ each switching element is chosen to include ~~comprise~~ a group of test transistors, ~~preferably an MOS field effect transistor, for each test transistor of the group of test transistors,~~

a gate of said test transistor is connected to said test node,

a source of said test transistor is connected to ~~[[a]]~~ the first test line point

and

a drain of said test transistor is connected to ~~[[a]]~~ the second test line point,

~~[[a]]~~ the first voltage is applied to said first test line point, and

~~[[a]]~~ the second, different voltage is applied to said second test line point, and

a current flow is detected between said first and said second test lines point.

4. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 3, wherein said detection of a

current flow is used for testing a correct or an incorrect working of said cascode circuit, or for determining a voltage on said test node.

5. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein said first voltage is either chosen to be an upper voltage limit applicable to ~~said~~ an electronic element if said electronic element is connected to a ground-voltage line, or is chosen to be a supply voltage minus an upper voltage limit applicable to said electronic element if said electronic element is connected to a supply-voltage line, and, in both cases, said second voltage is chosen to slightly differ, ~~[[e.g.,]]~~ by 1 to 15%, from said first voltage.

6. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 3 ~~[[1]]~~, wherein said electronic elements include ~~comprises~~ an MOS field effect transistor of a first channel conduction type, and said test transistors ~~[[is]]~~ are chosen to be an MOS field effect transistor of the same first channel conduction type.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 3~~[[1]]~~, wherein all sources of said ~~group of~~ test transistors are connected to said first test point and all drains of said ~~group of~~ test transistors are connected to said second test point.

9. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein each cascode element is consecutively activated.

10. (Currently Amended) A cascode circuit comprising:

a ~~[[n]]~~ plurality of electronic elements to be protected from high voltage;

a plurality of cascode elements connected to said electronic elements;

a plurality of test nodes arranged between said electronic elements and said cascode elements;

a first test line configured to receive a first selected voltage;

a second test line configured to receive a second selected voltage;

a plurality of switching elements allocated to said test nodes and connected to said test nodes, said switching elements having a plurality of switching states ~~and being constituted such that its switching state is~~ are changed when the voltage at said test node exceeds or falls below a given voltage limit, wherein one switching state represents a connection between the first test line and the second test line and another switching state represents a lack of a connection between the first test line and the second test line; and means a detection circuit for detecting the switching state of said switching element;

~~wherein said cascode circuit includes~~ comprises a plurality of electronic elements to be protected from high voltage and a plurality of cascode elements, each cascode element being connected to an electronic element, and wherein a group of the switching elements ~~[[is]]~~ are connected by at least one test line so that the electric signal on said at least one test line indicates whether the switching state of at least one switching element from said ~~group of~~ switching elements is in a changed switching state.

11. (Currently Amended) The cascode circuit according to claim 10, wherein said switching elements include ~~comprises~~

a group of test transistors, ~~preferably a MOS field effect transistor, for each test transistor of the group of test transistors,~~

a gate of said test transistor being connected to said test node,

a source of said test transistor being connected to a first test point and

a drain of said test transistor being connected to a second test point, and

the cascode circuit further comprises ~~means~~ circuitry for applying a first voltage to said first test point ~~and means~~ for applying a second, different voltage to said second test point, and ~~means~~ for detecting a current flow between said first and said second test points.

12. (Currently Amended) The cascode circuit according to claim 10, wherein said electronic elements include ~~comprises~~ an MOS field effect transistor of a first channel conduction type, and said test transistor is an MOS field effect transistor of the same first channel conduction type.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Previously presented) The cascode circuit according to claim 11, wherein all sources of said group of test transistors are connected to said first test point and all drains of said group of test transistors are connected to said second test point.